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PROPER COLORS IN DECORATION.

BY JOHN G. CRACE.

In decoration, it may be laid down as a principle that one color should dominate; that this dominant should be a primary or secondary; and that the other colors must be subsidiary to it. In the majority of cases the most perfect and beautiful harmony is produced by employing neutralised hues of color for the larger masses, and then giving freshness, cheerfulness, and beauty to the whole by the introduction in small masses of the primary or secondary colors that may form the proper equivalents to the prevailing color. It should be always remembered that the eye is seldom satisfied with any arrangement of color unless all the primaries are present in some shape or other.

In carrying out decorations, it will be found that all colors have two kinds of harmony—that of analogy or sympathy, and that of contrast.

For instance, we will suppose the walls of a room to be of a soft green color, and that curtains are required. Two colors are open to us: on the one hand, a rich yellow-brown, which is the softer or more sympathetic harmony; on the other hand, a warm maroon, which is the harmony of contrast.

The principal colorings of a room being decided, the decorator will have to consider how best to relieve with color his cornice and frieze, the ceiling, and the woodwork. The cornice is a very important feature in a room; it acts as a kind of frame to the walls, between these and the ceiling; but it should always be borne in mind that, except in peculiar cases, it should be made to belong to the walls; and with that view, particular care must be taken in the coloring of it, either by a soft contrast to the wall color, or by a color referring to the curtains or other harmonising hue.

There are three masses of color to be considered in living-rooms—the walls, the curtains, and the carpets; but it is by no means necessary that these should be all of different colors; two of them may accord, either the walls and curtains, or the curtains and carpet.

If the walls of a room are highly ornamented in color, either by arabesque painting or otherwise, it is desirable that the curtains be quiet in tone, and not of contrasted colors; also that the carpet preserve a subdued effect, that does not interfere with the decoration of the walls. On the other hand, if the walls of a room are of a quiet tone, or are white and ornamented with gilding, various colors in ornament or flowers may be introduced with propriety in the carpet.

As regards the coloring of carpets, I should generally recommend the ground to be of a deep, rich, retiring color, such as maroon or green, and the patterns, whether in ornament or flowers, to be as flat as possible, and entirely without cast shadows. The Indian carpets imported from Masulipatam are at all times quiet, retiring, and harmonious in their coloring, and worthy of particular study for the well-designed distribution of their ornament. It is surprising, when we consider the poverty and general ignorance of the men who work at these carpets, that the result should show such refinement and delicacy in the modulations of the colors.

When rooms are papered or painted in tints of color, the combination necessary to carry out a pleasing effect is sufficiently simple and easy; but even in these great care should be taken to have those tints of a soft, agreeable tone. There are greens and greens, buffs and buffs, and greys and greys: in the one case as ugly, raw, discordant, offensive, and displeasing, as in the other they may be soft, harmonious, agreeable, and refreshing to the sight.

What can be more incompatible than a crude emerald green? Soften it, however, with a little sienna, or other moderating color, and make it suitable in depth of tone to the size of the room, and your skill and taste will make it as agreeable as it would be otherwise répulsive. These tinted colors may be made considerably more effective by an harmonious combination with a contrasting tone of color in the stiles or margins.

In the woodwork of our rooms it seems to be too generally considered that it must be either tinted white, or grained in imitation of some wood. Now I do not proscribe graining; on the contrary, I like it occasionally; but I think it is used far too frequently. Why not employ a good brown, or maroon, or black, well relieved with light-colored lines, taking care to face up the work to a very smooth surface, and to varnish it? Above all, however, I like the real wood, even if it be plain deal or pitch pine; for this, if well finished by the joiner, and kept clean, will, when varnished, have a very handsome effect, and can be readily ornamented to any degree by painting dark lines and

ornament, as if inlaid upon it. The wear of this kind of work is far beyond any painting.

Again, on walls of staircases or entrance vestibules, or dados of rooms, imitations of marbles are often painted, and very beautifully painted too; for many of our English artists excel in this kind of work; but these imitations are adopted, not always because they are appropriate to the place, or particularly required, but because, being varnished, they wear well, and nothing else is suggested.

I think, however, that in a moderately sized house, where quiet taste is appreciated, stenciling in geometric patterns, in two shades of one color, is preferable to marbling, which, if done in an inferior manner, is a most unsightly sham.

In determining the colors for rooms, regard should be had to their aspect; giving cool and refreshing shades to the south, and warm, comfortable colors to the north. The use of a room should also, of course, influence the color. Then, also, pictures require particular consideration. If there are many in the room, and they are truly works of art, the color of the walls must be subservient to them. If the pictures are not very large, and the coloring of them not dark or heavy, sage green is a good tone. In this case the windows and doors might be cinnamon color, if not real wood; the cornice of the room might be vellum color, relieved with the cinnamon and dull violet in suitable parts of it; the ceiling might be pale grey. If, however, the room be large and the pictures boldly painted, red is an excellent color for the walls; it gives freshness and vigor to the paintings; and if the room is lighted from above, it renders it bright and cheerful—not undesirable qualities where there is no external prospect.

The woodwork, if already painted, may be black or vellum color, properly relieved on the moldings. The cornice and ceiling of the room should be carefully toned, so that nothing be too obtrusive; but no special colors can be proposed, as they would depend on the design of the architecture. Only I would warn my readers not to follow the advice of a clever writer in a popular magazine, saying that "a red room with a black ceiling, starred with dull sea green or yellow, is very bright and good." I doubt it.

Considerable discussion has occurred in late years as to the proper background for statues—whether it should be a quiet neutral tone of grey, or a more decided color, such as maroon red. I am strongly in favor of the decided color.

There may be special circumstances making the light neutral tone desirable for one or two statues; but taken as a rule for a gallery, or for even a single statue, I prefer the deep color. This must be modified, of course, according to the condition of the marble: if the statues are old and stained, the coloring must be lowered in tone accordingly.

The hue for walls where prints or photographs are to be hung should be a rich yellow-brown, or a leather color. This gives lustre to the black of the print, or the tone of the photograph.

Occasionally there may be some special object in a room requiring a corresponding modulation of the coloring, such as an allegorical painting in a ceiling, much darkened and obscured by age. Such cases have often occurred to me, and have caused difficulty; for you must manage to make the painting look well, and the ceiling not too gloomy.

I will give an example. In an old castellated house there was a room in which was to be arranged a series of family portraits. As the room faced the south, it was desired that the walls might not be red; so it was decided to have a bold damask pattern, green flock upon a brown leather and gold ground. The ceiling was divided by projecting beams into fifteen compartments, in each of which was a large oval painting of a cardinal virtue, in chiaro oscuro on a dark olive ground; these ovals were surrounded by low relief framing, and outside that by very light foliage ornament.

We made the framing deep vellum color, relieved with gilding, and in the margin put a tone of maroon red, the light ornament vellum, and the ground of the surrounding panel was painted blue, sufficiently modulated. The beams which were enriched we painted a brown color, and the ornaments on them were picked out vellum color, and relieved with maroon red and gilding. The curtains of the room were dull red, and the carpet a Turkey pattern in subdued colors. The ceiling of this room was of the nature of a discord, as it would be called in music; and yet to my eye it was satisfactory and harmonious.

You cannot lay down precise laws as to what colors shall be brought together: a careful modulation will enable an experienced artist to bring any colors together. Discords can always be made to modulate, if you but know how to do it. I once heard a learned man observe that "science

is a collection of laws, but knowledge is a collection of facts;" and there are facts which experience teaches us which it would be difficult to explain by reference to the laws of harmony, though these laws are just, sound and indisputable.

Hitherto we have been considering the principles of contrast and harmony, or their application to simple forms, under ordinary circumstances; but in churches, large halls, or public buildings of importance, it is necessary to consider very carefully the peculiar circumstances of each of them before designing the decoration or arranging the colors.

I am not surprised at architects dreading the indiscriminate use of color in a building on which they have bestowed much careful study and labor. Judicious and well-designed arrangements of color should add to the architectural effect; by these the principal constructive features of a building should be emphasised or clearly expressed; and the whole, avoiding confusion, should present a combination of symmetry of form and harmony of color.

As for me, I abominate whitewash. I see not the beauty of interior stone walls unrelieved; nor do I see the impropriety of covering those real stone walls with glowing color.

In Egypt, examples of decorative coloring done nearly three thousand years ago are still in fine preservation, and excite the warmest admiration. The interior walls of the temples are often covered with historical representations, brought out in color; the main architectural features were also painted.

In the British Museum and at the Crystal Palace may be seen reproductions of some of these, well worthy attention.

The Greeks, I have no doubt, carried the art of colored decoration to the same perfection as the other arts in which they so excelled.

Their descendants show us, by their decorative works executed in a provincial Roman city eighteen hundred years ago, how beautifully the art was still practised in their day.

I say their descendants, because it is generally understood that the art works of Rome were carried on by Etruscans and Greeks. The Romans were soldiers.

The City of Pompeii, submerged, almost forgotten, during eighteen hundred years, and now brought to light again, shows us all the details of Roman life as it existed at that distant period.

The walls of the houses and public buildings, though roofless, are still glowing with colors, fresh as the day on which the awful calamity overtook the city. It is, indeed, a mine of wealth to the art student. Here he will find wonderful combinations of color, and the utmost elegance, fancy, and beauty of ornament.

One of my favorite subjects from Pompeii is a yellow frieze, treated so simply and yet so harmoniously; the brilliance of the yellow, quieted and toned by white and grey, and force given to it by a black medallion, with its surrounding color; the whole resting on the chocolate-brown plinth. Under it is a frieze in black, forming part of the same decoration, relieved by light gold-color stems, with brown medallion in centre, a red one on each side, and the lilac-grey birds between. The walls below these have yellow panels, with black margins, ornamented with slender columns in white and red.

Another very clever bit is a frieze in black, with a light stem, and leaves branching in a graceful form, and letting in portions of yellow ground above the line, and red below it, and the little bits of green and brown in centre; the green birds, too, with gold-color and lilac wings, perched on the branch on either side, all combined, form a perfect piece of harmony.

My next example is in the Casa del Labirinto. Here the red walls are relieved with black pilasters, on which are birds and light foliage, with openings of bright yellow most cleverly introduced.

In another room of the Casa del Labirinto the walls are full green, relieved with delicate white pilasters and columns; in the centre is a panel of yellow, framed by light lilac. The dado is black, relieved with fine white lines and ornament. Above, in the cornice, is maroon.

In a room in the Casa del Poeta Trajico the walls are white. Pilasters are formed by green margins, and in them are slender spiral columns. There are gold-color margins to the panels, and small subjects in them. The dado is black, divided by white lines, and green plants springing from the base—so little work, and yet so great result.

In the Casa del Gran Duca there is a black wall, with a red pilaster, on which are light gold-color ornaments, with suspended masks, birds, etc. The black panels are relieved with diagonal stems with leaves and flowers; above is a frieze, colored

maroon, on which is a violet medallion, and two others in green.

All over Italy are to be seen very interesting specimens of decoration dating between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In the palaces at Mantua, Giulio Romano exercised his genius with grand effect; but the power of distributing color, as he has done it, requires a master mind.

In Munich, decoration has been applied to most of the palaces, churches, and public buildings. The Bavarian artists have carefully studied the decorations of Pompeii, and those of more recent times in Italy, and their works show excellent results. The decoration of the Allerheiligen Capelle, or All Saints Chapel, pleased me much, because great effect was produced by simple means.

In the Royal Library at Munich there is an effective decoration in the ceiling of the staircase, which is vaulted, and the bays are alternately colored blue and red; great brilliancy is given by this interchange of colors, and the various modulations of the lines and ornaments are worthy your notice.

I have endeavored to explain to you the principles which should guide you in the employment of color. The subject is so various and so extensive that it is impossible to do more than point out some of the main features of the art.

PRACTICAL HOME DECORATIONS.

(OUR CINCINNATI LETTER)

THE long, delicious Autumn, which has brought us to the very threshold of November—the vigil of All Souls—and finds our lawns like emeralds, the shell-tinted roses climbing up the lattices, and stray violets, under the hedges, is a charming subject for congratulatory talk at breakfast and garden parties, but it strikes the dealers in furniture, carpets and decorative *genre*, as being a summer-like aspect of affairs that is quite appalling. So long as the sunshine and the balmy breath of this exquisite weather keeps people out of doors, so long the interior shabbiness of their abodes continues a matter of indifference. Let a frost of that quality a Kentuckian calls "right smart," put in an appearance, and the demand for the equipment for the winter campaign will be brisk enough. The housekeeper is reluctant now to give up the charming summer *négligé* of Wakefield chairs and parquet floors, will clamor like Dogberry for

"Five gowns and every thing handsome about them."

Turkish rugs and portieres, mantels swathed in plush, the luxury of rich upholstery and screens to shut out every draft.

Meanwhile the dealers complain of small orders and slow collections, and growl at the unexpected dullness of business. The more cheerful spirits recall the fact that the cotton crop is ten weeks behind time, console themselves with picturing the rush of the later autumn and winter trade, which is sure to come.

In the department of Interior Decoration some very charming things are in progress among our amateurs and professionals. The influence of Mr. Benn Pitman's school of wood carving is most powerful. Himself an artist in the proudest sense of the word, the importance of his work and example can hardly be over-estimated in its effect upon the formation of refined and correct methods among his pupils.

In his home upon the eastern outskirts of the city Mr. Pitman has carried out to very beautiful conclusions some of his favorite theories of Interior Decoration. In this home his art is lavished everywhere, and from roof-tree to foundation stone it is a house beautiful.

Speaking of the dining-room of this house the current number of the *Magazine of Art* says of it: "This little apartment is indeed a gem, meriting a pilgrimage from those who admire talent and are moved by artistic achievement." The feature of this room is not the wood-carving, though doors, baseboard and buffet are rich in this particular, but the unique wall decoration. The room is lighted by a paneled frieze of tinted glass. To the walls are given a clouded effect, in which pale grey deepens into rose and blue. On the western wall, half covering it, stretch out the branches of an apple tree, a cloud of rosy bloom. A bird's nest is

half hidden in the branches, and a flight of birds in every possible grace of poise and motion drifts through the window panes and alights upon the tree. On the opposite wall a trumpet creeper-vine, laden with blossoms, wanders up and down, and the whole is a bower of beauty. Dainty decorated china fills the hanging shelves, carved in graceful designs of leaf and flower.

Another room, just completed, is in Mr. Pitman's opinion, lovelier yet. It is a bed-chamber, the ceiling lightly clouded, the baseboards of walnut, carved in some delicate incised pattern. The walls are tinted a sage green, in which the yellow much predominates over the blue. Surrounding the room is a sixteen inch frieze in a warm tint of terra cotta; beneath is a band of gold, and above a gilded picture bar. This frieze is decorated with four floral studies, sprays of white locust blossom, wild rose, passion flower and purple wisteria. These are arranged in masses, leaving large spaces undecorated. A few drooping sprays fall below the line of the frieze, and a few ambitious ones climb up on to the wall. The colors are wonderfully well managed, and the room, when lighted, is simply enchanting. "There is no part of this decoration," Mr. Pitman said yesterday in conversation with your correspondent, "that is not eminently practical; any good handcraftsman can be intrusted with the frieze and wall color, and any girl who can paint a good rose panel or know how the wisteria branches droop, can do the rest, and transform an ordinary room into a perfect paradise." The decoration of these rooms is the work of Mrs. Pitman and her sister Miss Wourse.

pepsia and a desire for suicide, into a charming room, in which it is a delight to linger. We have suggested to the mistress of this drawing-room that if she should buy a brass fender, and be sure the last novel was on the low table by her husband's easy chair, and his slippers beneath it, that he might, though he is the most "eminently clubable" man in town, be induced to spend an off night at home.

"But he smokes so!" said this short sighted little woman.

"Of course he does, but he is a charming fellow all the same, and if he made the atmosphere of his room capable of curing a Westphalia ham, I would 'grapple him to my soul' with a box of Cubanos before some other woman found it out."

Madame's cheek glowed red under its clear olive tint, but we knew she had forgiven us when we saw a great awakening light before the sconce mirrors of our neighbor's window opposite, the next night, and himself deep in an easy chair and a "Modern Instance," and enveloped in a cloud of fragrant latakia, the most domestic and contented creature in the "great State of Ohio."

Wonderful are the sticks and handles now used for parasols. Tinted or plain wood, bone, cane color or ebony, we want *chic* for the stick; the covering is plain or ribbed silk, the best being mahogany brown, black, or navy blue. For handles we want lizards, monkeys, cats, frogs, splinter bars, cows' heads, horses' heads, apples, cherries, pears, these last with the leaves all there, are the rage, and those who can afford it can have the handles of gold or silver so encrusted with precious stones that hardly any of the setting is visible.

We may have to thank the Fiji islands for our esthetic bricks, as we are told a most beautiful building material is made in the Fiji islands of the fossil corals. It is made in cubes, and will, we hear, wear for ever, that time having been certified to by proof. That is a good Fijian puff. Certain it is that large orders have been sent out for the cubes.

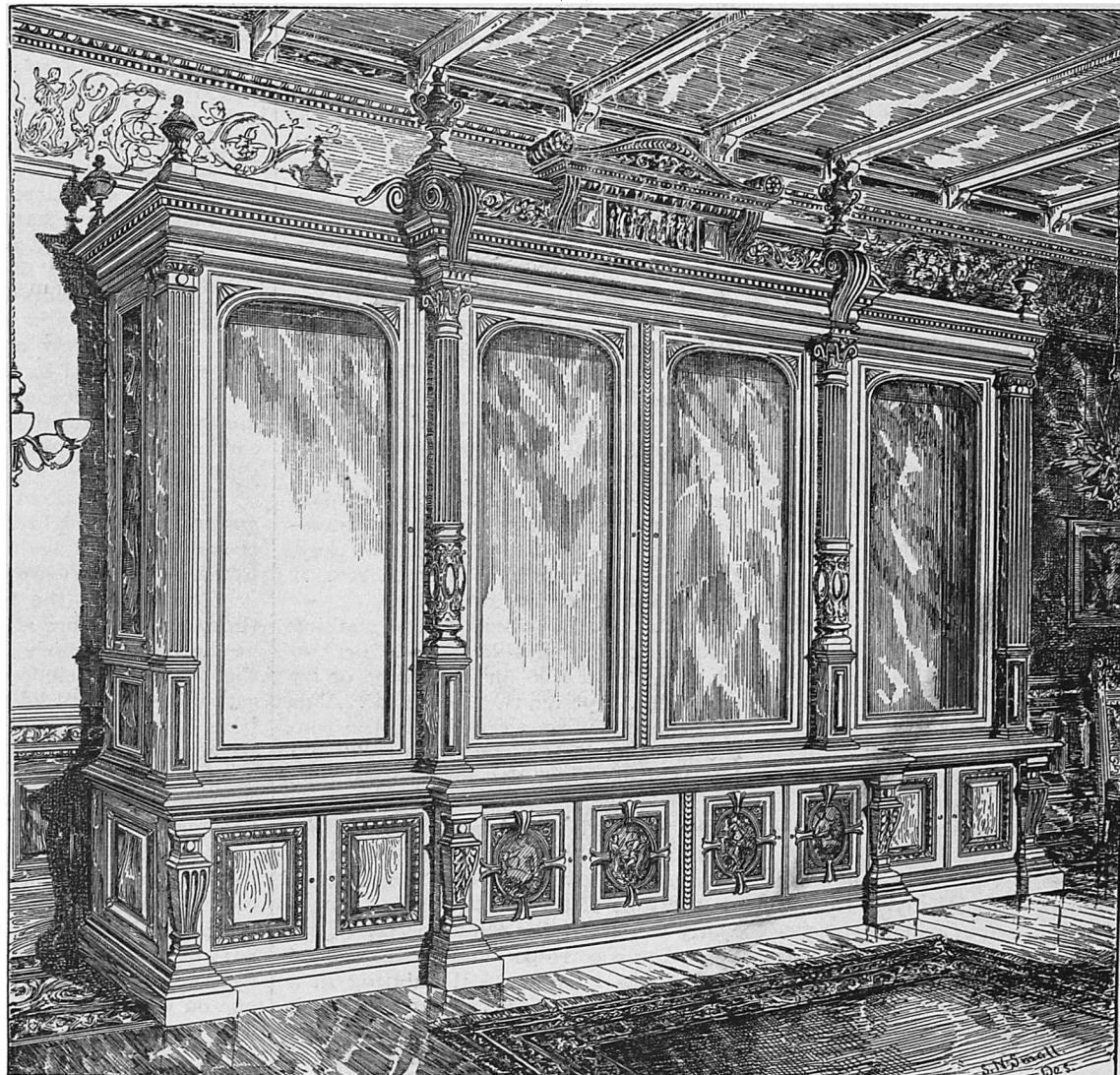
An exhibition of artistic and decorative trifles, made in horn, was recently opened in London, and some very unique and attractive specimens of this work were shown. The decorative possibilities of horn are almost unlimited, and it is strange people so overlook these qualities. Nicely mounted, a horn is a pleasing addition to many pieces of furniture and wall, and should be more recognized than it is.

Cards for dinner menus may be either diminutive three-fold screens, standing upon the table, or hand-painted satin. A tiny copper basket containing flowers beside each plate, is also in vogue.

It is a pleasure to mention the abolition of tides. A square of some material is now fitted into the back of the chair, and a fellow has some chance of being comfortable when he sits down.

A Parisian celebrity, who is a member of a reigning family, has given a grand *fête* to his intimate friends in his sumptuous hotel, in the style of Louis XIII., situated near the Park Monceau. The hotel has been furnished in a most luxurious and costly manner, the prevailing idea being oriental, though no oriental abode of ruling sovereign could boast such European taste and luxury in conjunction with such Eastern gorgeousness. The *fête*, to which the male friends were invited, had the female element provided in Eastern artists. Who could say whence brought, and at what lavish outlay? At the sound of a gong the splendid white satin and gold curtains were drawn back and discovered to the guests groups of *clémés* enveloped in veils, all looking very natural, and exciting the warmest curiosity. The orchestra was equally exotic, being composed of Arabs, Indians, and Eastern gypsies, while a dozen superb "niggeresses" attended at the supper, which was served in a *salle à manger*, that was a veritable pit of Eastern paradise. Dancing, professionally, was the opening attraction, and consisted in variety and piquancy, perhaps in *abandon*. Later on the French element essayed the Eastern dances in company with the professionals, with more or less success; but both Easterns and Parisians became quite at home in the Cotillon, which was replaced by the equally famous and popular dance that is called La Mondeheza.

A fashionable combination is bronze and crimson.



* CABINET IN THE CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC BOSTON MANUFACTURED BY J.S. PAINE

The Robert Mitchell Furniture Company opened last week at their superb show-rooms, the very choice collection of bric-a-brac, secured by Mr. Albert Mitchell while in Europe last summer, through his agents in every art centre of the world. Their Queen Anne Rooms, arranged a few years ago as studies and suggestions in Interior Decorations, are utilized for the exhibit.

Several replicas of choice Chippendale and Sheraton tables and escretoires are among them. One, a replica of a table sold at the Hamilton Palace sale for £3,000, has the top exquisitely painted in cupids, with marquetry inlays. Lacquers with inlays of metal, egg-shell lacquers, and good pieces of Benares and Arabian brass reponse, are in great request among our high art decorators.

Scarfs, shawls and lengths of delicate India silks, in the choicest artistic tints, which are the latest expression of aestheticism in decoration, were shown in beautiful variety. A length of pale bronze green India silk hangs over the lace or plush window drapery, is draped back midway, and the end carelessly twisted about the base of a jar of grey Benares brass, or a tall gris de Flandre jug, resting upon a broad brass tray.

These East India Company productions are worthy of praise. Whether in silk or cotton, the texture and colors are perfection, and every line of the drapery a thing of beauty and a joy forever. Twelve yards of drapery of this Indian fabric in dull red, a big wall mirror and sconces, draped in a bronze Indian shawl, a jardiniere at the window, two or three good bits of brass arranged at intervals, and a big rose bowl from the Wheatley pottery, has converted one of the most funeral drawing-rooms that ever inspired dys-